

Was The Iraqi War Biblically Justified?

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Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

Several subscribers have urged me to examine the biblical legitimacy of the "operation Iraqi freedom." I accepted this challenge because I was eager to understand better the biblical view of warfare. In particular, I wanted to find out if the liberation of Iraq by the coalition forces is biblically justifiable. Does the Bible justify the liberation of an oppressed people by Christian nations?

What does the Bible teach regarding our attitude toward the destruction and death caused by war? Are all the wars the same morally and ethically? Should Christians ever participate in warfare? Does the Bible provide any guidance for the conduct of war on either a personal or national level? Should Christians seek to maintain peace at any cost, even it means appeasing the enemy?

These are some of the questions that came to my mind as I set out to conduct this investigation. Unfortunately the limitations of time and space, have caused me to be selective in the questions I was able to address.

I must confess that it has been a time consuming project. I spent over 100 hours reading, thinking, and writing. Sometimes I felt guilty, because perhaps I should have devoted this time to complete the second chapter of the forthcoming book POPULAR HERESIES. At any rate, I am glad that I can share with you a biblical perspective not only on the Iraqi war, but on warfare in general. If you find this study enlightening, feel free to share it with your friends. As a result of your efforts, over 25,000 people have already subscribed to this ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER.

ENDTIME ISSUES TRANSLATED IN CHINESE

A Chinese Adventist sister who lives in Northeast China, informed me through an American Adventist living in China, that she has translated in Chinese and distributed the last five ENDTIME ISSUES. She says that translating the newsletters is a "pleasure." These studies have helped her faith to grow and many Adventists are benefiting from them.

The message includes a brief update about our church. "At present there are 300,000 Sabbathkeepers in China with over 17,00 house churches. I hope that the Gospel will advance quickly in China."

The message includes an appeal for me to continue the study of the possible prophetic role of Islam. As I have explained in previous newsletter, for the sake of peace I have suspended any further study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation related to the Antichrist. Let us pray for our work in China.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER

At the end of this newsletter you will find the following important announcements:

- 1) The date and location of my weekend seminars for April and May 2003
- 2) Information on how your church can purchase a state-of-the art HITACHI LCD VIDEO PROJECTORS at over 60% discount on the Factory Suggested Retail price. HITACHI has agreed to offer their line of outstanding LCD projectors to our Adventist churches and institutions at an incredible discount. Read the announcement at the end of this newsletter.
- 3) A special offer on the newly recorded SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR in audio, Videos, and DVD disks.

WAS THE IRAQI WAR BIBLICALLY JUSTIFIED?

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University**

While watching the colossal statue of Saddam Hussein on the central square of Baghdad being taken down with sledge hammers and cables by exuberant Iraqis, eager to release their pent up hate toward their brutal dictator who had tortured and killed over 10 per cent of their people, I could not help but ask myself: Was the "Operation Iraqi Freedom" biblically justified? Was it right for the coalition forces to invest enormous human and financial resources to liberate the Iraqis and prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction? Was the Iraqi war a violation of the biblical principle to love our enemies and to not to "repay anyone evil for evil" (Matt 5:44; Rom 12:17)?

Christians are divided in their answers to these questions. Some believe that the Iraqi war met the historical "Christian" criteria of a just war. For example, Dr Richard Land, President of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, is one of several Christian leaders who wrote to President Bush affirming that, "we believe that your stated policies concerning Saddam Hussein . . . are prudent and fall well within the time-honored criteria of just war theory."

By contrast, the leaders of over 60 prominent Christian organizations have also written to the President, urging him not to attack Iraq. In their view such an attack against Iraq would violate the traditional Christian doctrine of a just war.

With due respect for the sincerity of all these leaders, one wonders if any war that inevitably involves the slaughter of innocent victims, can legitimately be called "just war." The fact is that all wars are intrinsically evil, because they stem from selfishness and pride. They reflect our fallen, rebellious human nature, which affects international as well as interpersonal relationships. James 4:1-2 makes this point clearly, saying: "Where do these wars and battles within yourselves first start? Isn't it precisely in the desires fighting within yourselves? You want something and you haven't got it; so you are prepared to kill. You have an ambition you can't satisfy, so you fight to get your way by force" (Jerusalem Bible).

Whenever there is a battle between nations, or between two businesses, or labor and managements, or husband and wife, or parent and child, someone (maybe both) is exhibiting pride and selfishness. You want your way and I want my way. Let us fight for it and see who is going to win. Wars that are fought on the battlefield are first waged in the human heart. Arthur Holmes perceptively remarks that "To call war anything less than evil would be self-deception. The Christian conscience has throughout history recognized the tragic character of war. The issue that tears the Christian conscience is not whether war is good, but whether it is in all cases avoidable."¹

Scripture suggests that war, though evil, sometimes is unavoidable. It is significant that the first war was fought in heaven itself to terminate the rebellion initiated by the pride and selfishness of Lucifer (Is 14:12-15; Ez 28:11-18). "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven" (Rev 12:7-8). War proved to be a necessity in heaven itself in order to suppress the rebellion of Lucifer who was seeking to attain a more exalted position. Apparently God recognized that no further negotiations with Lucifer were possible. The only solution left was to expel him by force from the heavenly realm. If war proved to be an unavoidable necessity to terminate Lucifer's rebellion in heaven, where a loving God reigns supreme, then it can hardly be avoided on this earth where some despotic rulers are prepared to slaughter countless human lives to expand their power and territories.

The war that began in heaven has continued on this earth, because this planet became Satan's new theater of operation. Since then, war has been a perennial reality of human existence. From the earliest recorded events of human history all the way to modern times, tribes and nations have engaged in armed conflicts to resolve their disputes.

Objective of this Study. This Bible study is divided in two parts. The first looks at the Iraqi war from a biblical perspective. The fundamental question we wish to address is whether or not there is a biblical justification for Christian nations to engage in a war of liberation against a ruthless regime like that of Saddam Hussein who oppressed his people and threaten other countries.

The second part examines briefly the teachings of the Old and New Testaments regarding warfare. Pacifists tend to exclude the Old Testament in defining their position. They assume that the OT teachings regarding war were primitive and have been replaced by the superior, peaceful teachings of the NT. Such a view ignores that "all Scripture is given by divine inspiration" (2 Tim 3:16). An attentive study shows that the NT complements, rather than contradicts the teachings of the OT regarding warfare. Our aim is to establish if the Bible justifies waging war against a ruthless dictator who liquidates dissenters in his own nation and threatens the security of other nations.

WAS THE IRAQI WAR BIBLICALLY JUSTIFIED?

The presence of injustice in this world, where ruthless dictators like Saddam Hussein violate the rights of innocent people with impunity, raises the question: What is the Christian responsibility toward people suffering under oppressive political regimes? Can Christians morally ignore ruthless dictators who slaughter dissenters and threaten the security of other nations? Should Christian nations that have technological, financial, and human resources engage in wars of liberation like the current "operation Iraqi freedom"?

The answer of some "Christian" nations like France and Germany, is "NO!" They believe that it is not the responsibility of Western countries to disarm a ruthless dictator like Saddam Hussein. They claim that such problems must be resolved through the diplomacy of the United Nations. Unfortunately, they seem to forget the lesson of recent history. By waiting for diplomacy to work, European nations gave the chance to Hitler to liquidate over six millions Jews, besides millions of their own people.

Recent conflicts have clearly shown that there comes a time when diplomacy is ineffective and only armed intervention can stop the ambitions of ruthless dictators like Hitler, Milosovich, Idi Amin, General Pol Pot, and Saddam Hussein. If the American armed forces had not joined the British army to stop the Hitler's war of conquest, today most European countries, and possibly even the United States, would be living under the iron-fist, oppressive Nazi regime.

It appears to me that taking a stand against ruthless, dictatorial regimes is a moral necessity for Christians. Dietrich Bonhoeffer could have saved his life by following the strategy of some political and religious leaders, like the Pope himself, who tried diplomatic solutions that entailed partial cooperation with Hitler. But, he chose to take a stand against the atrocities being committed by Hitler's regime. We salute him for his willingness to pay the price of imprisonment and ultimately death.

It is unfortunate that all too often Christian people and nations have chosen to ignore the slaughtering of innocent people by ruthless dictators. Do you remember the killing fields of Kampuchea, where General Pol Pot slaughtered over two million innocent Cambodians, because they were ideological unsound? Would it have been unjust for Christians nations to joined together to stop that massacre by eliminating Pol Pot himself? Isn't a Christian responsibility "to loose the chains of injustice, and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke"? (Is 58:6).

Was the “operation Iraqi freedom” morally justified? For me the answer is suggested by the record of Saddam Hussein ruthless regime. In his letter to *The Australian* newspaper (October 29, 2002), Dr Leanne Piggott, Professor of Middle East Studies at the University of Sydney, offers this succinct account of Saddam’s atrocities: “At the end of the Gulf war in 1991 the Shiites of southern Iraq rose up in rebellion against Saddam to try to shake off the dictatorship under which they had been living. The uprising was brutally crushed by the Iraqi army and Saddam’s nine internal security services. For example, in Amara (near Basra), they made the Shiites, or anyone who looked religious, lie down in the streets and then buried them alive under asphalt. Some 60,000 to 70,000 people were killed in and around Amara in 1991. During the 1990s, the regime killed about 300,000 Shiites in southern Iraq.

“In the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s, the Iraqi regime destroyed 4,000 Kurdish villages in the north of the country. Between 100,000 and 150,000 Kurds were killed, some with poison gas. Around a million more people were sent into internal exile.

“Since 1979, Saddam has been directly responsible for the deaths of approximately one million Iraqi citizens and a further one million Iraqi soldiers who died in wars which he instigated against Iran and Kuwait. Between 1.5 and 2 million Iraqis have been internally displaced and a further 4.5 million Iraqi refugees are scattered across the globe. Altogether, 10 per cent of the Iraqi population has been killed or deported.”

In the light of this appalling record, didn’t the Iraqi people deserve some justice? How much longer should their repression and suffering have continued? Shouldn’t we as Christians thank God for the courageous leadership of President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair? Both men faced enormous opposition at home and abroad. Millions of people in the major capitals of the world demonstrated against their determination to disarm Saddam Hussein and liberate the Iraqis. Both men risked their own political careers for what they rightly believed to be a just cause. Those who disagree with the objectives and outcome of the Iraqi war, should take time to watch on TV the scenes of jubilation by Iraqis celebrating their liberation.

We only wish that America would be equally concerned to defend the right of other oppressed people like the Palestinians who have no economic benefits to offer in return. The same is true of the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, Cambodia, and earlier in Uganda by Idi Amin. It would seem that when millions of innocent people are slaughtered in countries that do not pose a threat to Western nations, the cry of these innocent victims goes unheard.

The Providential Role of the United States

During the past fifty years America has played the leading role in liberating oppressed people. European nations were liberated from Nazism; South Korea was liberated from North Korea and Japan; Soviet countries were liberated from communist regimes; Balcan countries were liberated from the ruthless war of Milosovich, Middle East countries like Kuwait and Iraq have been liberated by the despotic rule of Saddam Hussein.

Comparatively speaking the participation of European countries in these wars of liberation has been minimal. European politicians, including my Italian countrymen, are great philosophers. They talk a lot about international problems, but they do very little about them. Michael Novak, a perceptive TV commentator, rightly observes that the “Europeans are living in a kind of welfare paradise, which they are not willing to give up. Since 1945, they have by and large been content for the people of the United States to pay the huge expenses of defending them from the Soviet Union and other threats. Meanwhile, they have concentrated on building a prosperous and comfortable life, at a level of popular wealth never known before in the history of Europe.

“The Europeans do not wish to spend for military defense. Therefore, they have adopted a new philosophy of peace, reliance on the United Nations and the European Community, and comfort in their own military weakness. By these means, they hope to overcome the heritage of past wars within Europe.

“This leaves the United States to deal with the forces of disorder and hatred being spewed out by the doctrine of Wahhabism, nurtured in the bosom of certain Islamic countries. This doctrine teaches terrorism and subversion, along with a national socialist philosophy of social organization. It has inspired the Baath party of Iraq, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the ruling party in Sudan, the madrassas of Pakistan and above all Saudi Arabia, and others.”²

Partly as a result of the horrors of the World Wars, Western European nations have largely embraced pacifist ideas that oppose war. Most Europeans believe, as Dennis Prager observes, that “wars are wrong, that any evil—from Communism to Saddam Hussein or North Korea owning weapons of mass destruction—is better than fighting. America, on the other hand, believes that it is sometimes better to fight evil. The last time many Europeans demonstrated against America was when President Ronald Reagan put Pershing missiles in Europe. Europeans thought that confronting the Soviets was provocative and wrong.”³

European Secularism and Moral Relativism

European pacifism largely stems from the rampant secularism that relativizes the distinction between good and evil taught by the Christian faith. Prager explains: “Europe passionately affirms secularism, while America remains the most religious among the industrialized democracies. In this sphere, too, either America or Europe is right. And the predominance of America, a religious country—one that affirms the religion the European elites have rejected—infuriates the Europeans.

“Positing no transcendent or religious basis for an objective and universal standard of good and evil, Europe disdains moral absolutes and moral judgments. Whether it was President Reagan calling the Soviet Union an “evil empire” or President Bush labeling North Korea, Iran and Iraq an “axis of evil,” Europeans (and the American Left, whose values are identical) found such moral labeling contemptible.

“Indeed our president personifies all that Europe dislikes in America. He comes from the business world, wears an American flag on his lapel, is ready to go to war against an evil regime, and believes deeply in God, in Christianity and America’s Judeo-Christian identity.”⁴

Ultimately, the opposition of most Europeans to the “operation Iraqi freedom” reflects the rejection of those moral and religious values that still characterize America. Christian values still influence the social and political policies of the American people, because about 50 per cent of them go to church or to the synagogue. This is hardly the case in Europe where less than 10 per cent of the people attend church. In my own country of Italy it is estimated that 95 per cent of the people go to church three times in their life: when they are hatched, matched, and dispatched. The absence in Western Europe of strong moral and religious values facilitates the tolerance of various forms of evils, including the despotic regime of Saddam Hussein.

Is the Lord Using America Today?

In the light of the leading role America has played in liberating people like the Iraqis and in protecting mankind from the threat of weapons of mass destruction, we may ask: Is the Lord using America today—a country founded by people who escaped from persecution—to liberate oppressed people?

The Scripture supports this possibility by teaching that God has used certain nations to bring an end to evil empires whose wickedness had reached the limit of His mercy. The handwritings on the wall told Belshazzar that he “had been weighed on the scales and found wanting” (Dan 5:27). Because of his defiant acts against God and His people, God used Darius the Mede to bring to an end the Babylonian empire (Dan 5:31). For the same reason soon afterwards God used Cyrus to subdue the Babylonians and the Medes. Cyrus allowed exiled Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple at Jerusalem (2 Chr 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5). Surprisingly, in Isaiah 45, Cyrus is called the Lord’s “anointed.”

“This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him, to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and I will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron . . . so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name” (Is 45:1-3; NIV).

In this prophecy, Cyrus is announced by name and is called the Lord’s “anointed,” because he was called to bring to an end wicked empires and to enable the Jews to return to their homeland. It is evident that God recognizes that when the wickedness of a nation or an empire has reached the limits of His mercy, an armed intervention by another nation becomes a necessity to bring such evil regime to an end. In the Bible the rise and fall of nations is the outcome, not of natural causes, but of God’s intervention to bring to an end wicked and ruthless governments (Ps 75:6-7; Gen 15:16; Acts 17:26-27; Prov 14:34).

A clear enunciation of this principle is found in Genesis 15:13-16, where the Lord told Abraham in a dream that his “descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years . . . In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the *sins of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure*” (NIV).⁵

In His long-suffering God was willing to wait four hundred years until the iniquity of the various tribes inhabiting Palestine (Gen 15:19-20) had reached the limits of His mercy. At that time the Lord instructed the Israelites to destroy these tribes in order to protect them from adopting the same abominations. “Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God” (Deut 20:17-18).

The fact that God has used in the past, not only the Israelites, but also other nations to bring to an end tribes, nations, and empires whose sins had reached the limits of His mercy, gives us reason to believe that the Lord has used the coalition forces to bring to an end Saddam Hussein’s ruthless regime and help the Iraqis establish a democratic form of government.

The purpose of the “Operation Iraqi Freedom” was not to conquer Iraq and its natural resources, but to protect America, Western countries, the Iraqis, and the people of the region, from a dictator who has demonstrated his willingness to use whatever means necessary to rule over as many people as possible. President Bush made this point plain in his State of the Union Address, when he said: “And tonight I have a message for the brave and oppressed people of Iraq: Your enemy is not surrounding your country—your enemy is ruling your country. And the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation.”⁶

The world in which we live has changed drastically. It would be a tragic mistake to wait for a dictator like Saddam Hussein to begin using weapons of mass destructions, before Christian nations try to stop him. History teaches that if dictators are not stopped before they execute their deadly plans, it is much more costly to stop them later.

As Christians we can take comfort in the fact that President Bush is depending, not simply on his own wisdom and that of his advisers, but also on divine guidance. In the closing words of his State of the Union Address, Bush said: "We Americans have faith in ourselves—but not in ourselves alone. We do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history. May He guide us now, and may God continue to bless the United States of America."⁷

The providential role that America is fulfilling today as protector of peace, champion of justice, and liberator of some oppressed people, should not cause us to forget the reverse role it will play in the future. Over hundred years ago Ellen White predicted that "our nation [United States] will disconnect herself from righteousness. . . . our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government."⁸ When this happens, we know that the end is near.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF WARFARE

The preceding reflections on the legitimacy of the "operation Iraqi freedom," provides a basis for a fuller investigation into the biblical teachings regarding warfare. Historically, Christians have been divided on their interpretation of what the Bible teaches about war. The spectrum of Christian interpretations range from absolute rejection of war to full participation with church blessings and authority. These extreme interpretations are reflected on the one hand in the pacifist words of the American folk hymn "Gonna lay down my sword and shield by the riverside, ain't gonna study war no more," and on the other hand in the battle cry of the Crusaders "God wills it."

Between these two extreme interpretations, there are the moderate positions of those who believe that the Bible teaches nonresistance or participation only in a just war. The "just war" interpretation is the moderating position that has prevailed throughout Christian history.

To understand what the Bible teaches about war, we shall briefly examine some of the relevant passage found in both the Old and New Testaments. The intent is to provide a biblical overview of warfare to enable us to formulate a responsible Christian position.

WARFARE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Example of Abraham

The first mention of a war conflict in the Bible is in Genesis 14 where Chedorlamoer, king of Elam and a coalition of other kings, made war against the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela. Lot, Abram's nephew, was captured together with his family members and goods. When Abram learned that Lot had been taken captive, he went to war against Chedorlamoer, king of Elam. The military operation was successful in rescuing Lot, his people, and their goods.

There is no mention that the Lord directed Abram to take this action, but when he returned, Melchizedek king of Salem, who "was priest of God Most High," blessed Abram saying: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth . . . who has delivered your enemies into your hand" (Gen 14:19-20). In Genesis 15, God further blesses Abram in a vision. The story suggests that the Lord blessed Abram rescue operation, though there is no evidence of God directing this action.

The Lord as Warrior

Most of the references to war in the Old Testament concern the Israelites fighting in the Wilderness, in the entrance into Canaan, and against various enemies of the nation such as the Canaanites, Philistines, Amalekites, and Arameans. In numerous texts God is portrayed as a Warrior who leads His people to battle and fights for them. It is important

to note that this is the way the Lord reveals Himself to His people liberated from Egypt. The role of the Lord as Warrior establishes a model in the Bible for future warfare.

In the well-known Song of Moses and Miriam the Lord is praised for his military accomplishments: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. . . . *The Lord is a warrior*; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea" (Ex 15:1-4; NIV Emphasis supplied). The focus of this song is on God as the leader of the army who prosecutes the war and utterly destroys the Egyptian army.

The image of God as a Warrior forms the basis for His presence among His people in leading them to success in their battles (Ex 17:8-16; Num 21:1, 23, 33). This perspective culminates in Nathan's prophecy where the Lord identifies with the line of David in such a way that the wars of Israel become the wars of God (2 Sam 7:5-16). Several Psalms celebrate the victory that God has promised to His people through the line of David (Ps 2, 78, 110).

The Lord as Warrior fights not only for His people, but also against them when they turn away from Him. The destruction of the Northern and Southern kingdoms are described in moral terms that suggest a direct relationship between Israel's sin and God allowing the kingdoms to fall in the hands of their enemies. For example, 2 Kings explains that "Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria" because "the people of Israel walked in all the sins which Jeroboam did; they did not depart from them" (2 Kings 17:22-23).

What was true for the Northern Kingdom of Israel became true two centuries later also for the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Because of their rebellion, the Lord dispatched the Babylonians with the charge to punish the Jews (Jer 4:5; 5:17, 26-30). God directs the army of Babylon (Jer 25:14-38) and calls Nebuchadnezzar His servant (Jer 27:6-10).

The two pictures of the Lord fighting for and against Israel, reflect His commitment to preserve His holiness by placing a limit to human wickedness (Gen 15:16; Deut 28:49-68). The prophets capture this theme in their description of the Day of the Lord in which God executes His judgment upon all peoples, by destroying the evildoers and saving the faithful (Mal 4:1-3).

Israel at War

War is seen in the OT as an unavoidable evil. People are instructed, not to be pacifist, but to wage a war in a responsible way, when necessity calls for it. For example, Deuteronomy 20 offers specific guidelines on how to wage a war. Instructions are given to spare, not only women and children, but even the trees. "When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them; for you may eat of them, but you shall not cut them down" (Deut 20:19).

Every facet of war had religious significance. The conflict was initiated and led by God (Ex 17:16; Num 31:3). Sacrifices were offered to ensure God's support (1 Sam 7:8-10; 13:9, 12). The Lord Himself leads out in the wars (Is 13:3; Jer 51:27). The ark of the covenant, symbolizing God's presence was often taken into battle (1 Sam 4:3). The Lord raises up charismatic leaders to conduct the war (Deut 31:7; Jud 6:14). The Bible does not glorify war. It simply recognizes it as a necessary evil, which is part of the greater cosmic conflict between good and evil.

When comparing the accounts of warfare found in the Bible with those of the ancient Near-Eastern empires, one finds that there is far less brutality in the Israel's practice of war.⁹ Moreover, all the wars subsequent to the taking of the land of Canaan, are defensive wars. Contrary to the wars of conquests of the Hittites, Egyptians,

Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Greek, Israel's military campaigns were always in self-defence against aggressors entering their homeland (Josh 10:3-5; 11:1-5).

The prophets express concern over unnecessary brutality and bloodshed. They look forward to the day when the endless cycle of war and bloodshed would be broken: "The law will go out of Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge the nations and will settle disputes for many nations. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Is 2:3-4; NIV).

Summing up, the Old Testament speaks of war in a realistic way, as reflective of the conflict between good and evil. There are times when war becomes necessary to stop human rebellion and wickedness and restore a degree of peace and justice. As expressed in Ecclesiastes "There is a time for everything . . . a time for war and a time for peace" (Ecc 3:1, 8).

WARFARE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Many Christians believe that the New Testament teachings on warfare differ radically from that of the Old Testament. Simply stated, armed conflicts are justified in the Old Testament in certain situation, but they are never approved in the New Testament. This distinction posits two different concepts of God. The OT God is allegedly a Warrior, while the NT God is a Peacemaker.

Is such a radical distinction between the Old and New Testaments' understanding of God and warfare justifiable? If the difference were true, then we are forced, like Marcion in the second century, to reject the OT God as cruel and inferior to the loving God of the NT. But this dualistic view has long been rejected by Christian churches because it negates the unity and total inspiration of the Scripture. A balanced reading of the NT texts suggests that there is a basic agreement between the Old and New Testaments on their teaching on warfare. The length limitations of this Bible study allows us only to briefly review some of the relevant passages.

Jews and Christians Serving in the Army

During the Apostolic period we find Jews and new Christian converts serving in the Roman army. When Jewish soldiers, who most likely were serving under Herod Antipas, came to John the Baptist to be baptized, they asked like the rest of the people what changes they should make in their lives: "Soldiers also asked him: 'and we, what shall we do?'" (Luke 3:14). John replied: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14).

If serving in the Roman army was seen as inappropriate for believers, this would have been a perfect opportunity for John to tell soldiers to resign from the military service and choose a more suitable profession. After all there was no obligatory conscription into the army. The military service was voluntary. But John counseled the soldiers not to take advantage of their armed status to do violence and to rob people. Instead, they should be content with their wages.

The significance of John's counsel cannot be minimized. If contrary to the Old Testament, the New Testament teaches pacifism, then John the Baptist and later Jesus and the apostles would have counseled those serving in the army to get out of it immediately. The absence of such counsel suggests that military service was were seen as an unavoidable evil in this sinful world.

The attitude of Jesus toward those serving in the army was similar to that of John the Baptist. When a Roman centurion came to Christ, begging Him to heal his paralyzed servant, Jesus did not rebuke him for being a soldier. Instead, He commended his faith saying: "Truly, not even in Israel have I found such faith" (Matt 8:10). Christ's statement is significant, because it shows that being a soldier is not incompatible with being a man

of faith. After all, a vital function of the Roman soldiers stationed in various parts of the empire was to keep law and order. In Acts Roman soldiers repeatedly intervened to protect Paul from mob lynching.

Another revealing example is the story Cornelius reported in Acts 10. Cornelius was a Roman centurion who apparently embraced the Jewish faith by becoming a “God-fearer,” that is, an uncircumcised Jew. He is described as “a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation” (Acts 10:22). He was a devout man who prayed constantly (Acts 10:30-32). The Lord answered his prayer by sending Peter to him.

When Peter saw that Cornelius and his household had received the Holy Spirit, he asks: “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47). No one objected to their baptism because they were serving in the Roman Army. After their baptism Cornelius and his household apparently continued to serve in the army. There is no mention in the NT of any soldiers who were admonished to leave their military profession in order to become Christians. In fact, Paul counsels new converts, saying; “Brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God” (1 Cor 7:24).

Jesus’ Attitude Toward Warfare

On the night of His betrayal Jesus made two statements about self-defense which at first glance appear to be contradictory. Knowing that soon He would leave His disciples, Jesus counseled them saying: “When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” And they said, ‘No, nothing.’ And he said to them, “But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one” (Luke 22:35, 36).

Later on the same night, Jesus made a second significant statement when Peter struck with a sword the ear of the slave of the high priest: “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scripture be fulfilled that it must happen this way?” (Matt 26:52-54).

The two statements stand in apparent contradiction. On the one hand Jesus counsels the disciples to equip themselves for the new worldwide ministry with a purse, a bag, and a sword, but on the other hand, shortly afterwards He tells Peter not to use the sword. How can this apparent contradiction be resolved? Simply by looking at the context of each statement. Peter was told not to use the sword, because Jesus had warned the disciples that He would be arrested and suffer death. He wanted Scripture to be fulfilled. Preventing His death by armed resistance, would have defeated the very purpose for Christ’s coming into this world.

The injunction to put away the sword must be understood in the context of the divine purpose for Christ’s arrest and death, and not as a general admonition against using weapons for self-defence. Peter was acting impulsively, without understanding the purpose of Jesus’ arrest and death. Jesus intimated that those who like Peter act violently, controlled by unbridled passions, will die a similar violent death.

Yet, Peter and the other disciples were instructed to take up a sword, an outer garment, and money pouches for their new worldwide itinerant ministry. The reason for the inclusion of a sword in their travelling outfit, is most likely because of the need to protect themselves from robbers, who posed a constant danger to travelers. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a good example. To be safe, people traveled in groups and with a sword. By recognizing the need to carry a sword for self-defense, Jesus hardly advocated passive pacifism.

Pacifists reject this interpretation by appealing to Matthew 5:39 where Christ appears to contradict his counsel about carrying a sword for self-defense, when He said: "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt 5:39). Pacifists interpret this statement as an unconditional injunction to be willing to suffer unjustly, rather than acting in self-defense. Such an interpretation ignores that statement is part of a larger sermon of Jesus, where He makes several radical statements about suffering loss rather than taking legal action, going the second mile, and giving money without questioning to those who want to burrow (Matt 5:40-41).

To interpret these radical statements of Jesus as unconditional commands, it is a serious mistake for two reasons. First, a literal interpretation ignore that Jesus often used hyperboles to capture the attention of the people. How else can we understand Christ's saying that "If any . . . hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Did Christ really mean that we must hate everybody, including ourselves, in order to follow Him? Why then, did He teach to love our enemies when we are supposed to hate everybody? It is evident, that Jesus used hyperboles to make a point. In the case of non resisting an evil person, presumably the point is that for a Christian it is better not to be contentious with evil people. Rather than arguing and fighting troublemakers, it is wiser for Christians to ignore them.

A second reason why Christ's radical injunctions cannot be interpreted as absolute for all situations, is because they are contradicted by the rest of the New Testament. For example, if Christ's injunctions about not resisting evil doers, turning the other cheek, and giving in to those what want to sue, are to be taken as normative for all situations, then Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, failed miserably. Why? Because he resisted his accusers by going out of his way to defend himself before the Jewish and Roman authorities.

He appealed to his Roman citizenship to protest his beating and imprisonment (Acts 16:37-38). During his legal process, Paul accepted the help of Roman military escorts in order to protect his life (Acts 23:12-33; 28:16). He went as far as appealing to Caesar, which was the Supreme Court of the time (Acts 25:11). Paul's defense strategy hardly suggests that he understood Christ's injunction not to resist evil persons as passive pacifism.

Jesus accepted the notion of obedience to civil government when He said: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" (Matt 22:21; Mark 12:17). Like today, part of the taxes were used to support the Roman army. Had Jesus rejected any form of Christian support and participation in the military service, most likely He would have qualified how Christians were to pay their taxes.

Jesus predicted that His followers will suffer persecution for their faith. Suffering injustice for the faith would prove to be a witness unto others and would be rewarded by God. A distinction must be made between *spiritual* and *secular* warfare, that is, between suffering for refusing to compromise with evil, and resisting the aggression of evildoers interested in our goods, not in our faith.

Christ calls Christians to be peace-loving, not desiring conflict. Yet there are situation when resisting evildoers becomes a moral necessity, or Christ would not have counseled to buy a sword, or God would not have commanded the Israelites to war against certain wicked nations, or Michael and His angels would not have fought in heaven against the devil and his angels (Rev 12:7).

In the cleansing of the Temple, Christ Himself made a display of force by chasing cattle merchants and money changers out of the Temple: "And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables" (John 2:15; NIV).

Christ could have used diplomacy and gentle persuasions, by telling the merchants: "Would you guys, please, conduct your business outside the sacred precincts of the Temple? You know very well that this is not the place to sell cattle and change money! Please respect the sacredness of the Temple." Apparently Christ understood that gentle persuasions would have been fruitless. So He decided to display some force by cracking the whip and overturning tables and letting the coins run all over. This episode hardly projects the image of Christ acting as a passive pacifist.

To interpret Christ's willingness to suffer the cruel scourging and crucifixion without complaint, as meaning that Christians must be willing to suffer at the hands of evildoers without opposing resistance, means to fail to recognize the atoning function of His suffering and death. He suffered and died to pay the penalty of our sins (Rom 5:6-9). We are not called to suffer and die to expiate our sins, or the sins of others. The persecution we may face for following Jesus is part of the *spiritual warfare* to be discussed later. But there is a difference between the *spiritual* and the *secular* warfare, that is, suffering for our faith, and supporting a divinely established governing power committed to guarantee order by fighting against evildoers and armed aggression. This distinction is clarified by Paul in Romans 13.

Paul and the Christian Responsibility

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul provides the clearest instructions found in the NT regarding the Christian responsibility toward civil authorities. To appreciate Paul's instructions, it is important to remember that the apostle respected the Roman government, which guaranteed law, order, and peace in the Mediterranean world. On numerous occasions Roman soldiers rescued Paul from popular lynching and protected him on his long journey to Rome to appeal his case before the Emperor himself.

In the light of his positive experience with Roman authorities, Paul urges submission to authorities, saying: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. . . . For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to authorities, not only because of possible punishment, but also because of conscience" (Rom 13:1, 4-5; NIV).

Two points should be noted in this admonition. First, Paul views governing authorities as divine established. He goes as far as describing the ruler as "God's servant." Such a high esteem of governing rulers is surprising, since in most cases they obtained their position, not through democratic elections, but through intrigues and political plotting. In spite of the questionable ways in which governing authorities achieved their position, Paul still regards them as God's servants called to provide law and order in an hostile world.

Second, Paul acknowledges the right of rulers to use the sword to punish evildoers. It is evident that the apostle was not a pacifist, because he approves the use of weapons to punish evildoers. It is reasonable to assume that if governing authorities can use weapons to punish evildoers within a nation, they can also legitimately use armed intervention to protect a country from hostile foreign aggression. In other words, Paul's statement suggests that there is a legitimate use of arms to maintain law and order within a nation and presumably to protect a nation from hostile foreign aggression.

The state, the church, and the family have all different spheres of responsibility. Each functions in its own divinely appointed role. The Christian is to obey the present civil authorities (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-15) to the extent that they do not violate God's moral law. When that happens, Christians are called to obey the divine law, rather than the human law (Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29). As Christians we are to support civil authorities, even though they make mistakes. We must choose the lesser of two evils, in order for us to carry on our lives (Rom 13:4).

Military Heroes Praised in the New Testament

An indirect, but telling indication of the New Testament recognition of the legitimacy of warfare in certain situation, is found in Hebrews 11:32-34. The author praises OT warriors such as Gideon, Barak, Samson, David, as examples of great men of faith who risked their lives in armed conflict. "And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight" (Heb 11:32-34).

The fact that these OT worthies are mentioned as great examples of faith "who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, . . . became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight," suggests that their military exploits are viewed in the NT as worthy of commendation. If participation in any form of warfare was regarded in the NT as intrinsically evil, it would have been most inappropriate to praise OT warriors as example of outstanding faith. What makes these warriors great men of faith, is the fact that they risked their lives in armed conflicts to defeat evil powers and advance the cause of justice. The implication is that faith is manifested not only in passive resistance, but also in active armed intervention against evil.

Peace is not Always Possible

Christians are called to be peacemakers, but peace is not always possible in this sinful world. In admonishing believers not to pay back evil for evil or to take vengeance, Paul says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom 12:18; NIV). We must do whatever we can do promote peace by avoiding conflicts and violence. But the phrase "if possible," suggests that sometimes peace is not possible. There are situations when peace can only be maintained through armed conflicts designed to ward off aggressors. If we are aware of evil intentions by an individual or a nation to harm others, we would hardly keep the "peace" by giving in to their demands. It would be morally irresponsible to turn over ones' wife to a rapist just to "keep peace."

When totalitarian regimes threaten to take over countries and to destroy the lives of millions, Christians cannot for the sake of "peace" allow the aggressors to have their own ways. There are situation where maintaining the peace is impractical and even impossible, even if we are not motivated by revenge.

Christians cannot ignore the evil intent of others just for the sake of maintaining the "peace." Apparently for the sake of keeping peace the Corinthians had refused to disfellowship a couple engaged in a incestual relationship. Paul strongly condemned such a tolerant attitude as "arrogance" (1 Cor 5:2) and instructed the church to act forcefully, saying: "Drive out the wicked person from among you" (1 Cor 5:13).

To tolerate evil means to condone it. Christians cannot afford to do that. For example, if a church members refuses to work, preferring instead to live on the assistance of the church and/or government, we may be tempted to tolerate that situation for the sake of peace. But the Scripture admonishes otherwise. Paul says: "For even when we were with you we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat" (2 Thess 3:10). For the sake of peace the church may be inclined to feed a lazy person, but there comes a point when the best way to help that person is to deny him food.

In summary, peace is not always possible for Christians. Keeping peace by tolerating evil at the personal or international levels, can result in greater evils. Refusing to defend our family or our country from evil aggressors, ultimately can result in the loss of innocent lives and liberty. Peace cannot always maintained by giving in to deliberate evil. To do so peace becomes appeasement.

Difficult Decisions in Choosing the Lesser of Two Evils

The issue of self-defense and armed intervention is rarely a clear moral choice. Often it is a matter of deciding which principles to follow in a given situation: suffering unjustly for one's faith, defending the rights of oppressed, punishing evildoers for their crime. Once we accept the justice of killing a murderer for his crime, then in principle we must also accept the justice of eliminating a ruthless dictator who murders his own people and threatens the peace of other countries.

Gleason Archer perceptively asks: "Is it really a manifestation of goodness to furnish no opposition to evil? Can we say that a truly good surgeon should do nothing to cut away cancerous tissue from his patient and simply allow him to go on suffering until finally he dies? Can we praise a police force that stands idly by and offers no slightest resistance to the armed robber, the rapist, the arsonist, or any other criminal who preys on society? How could God be called 'good' if He forbade His people to protect their wives from ravishment and strangulation by drunken marauders, or to resist invaders who have come to pick up their children and dash out their brains against the wall?"

"... No nation could retain its liberty or preserve the lives of its citizens if it were prevented from maintaining any sort of army for its defense. It is therefore incumbent on a 'good God' to include the right of self-defense as the prerogative of His people. He would not be good at all if He were to turn the world over to the horrors of unbridled cruelty perpetrated by violent and bloody criminals or unchecked aggression of invading armies."¹⁰

We need to remember that armed intervention against wicked evildoers who threaten our neighbor or our country, is not just a matter of justice, but also of charity. As evangelical scholar Darrell Cole writes, "The Christian who fails to use force to aid his neighbor when prudence dictates that force is the best way to render that aid is an uncharitable Christian. Hence Christians who willingly and knowingly refuse to engage in a just war . . . fail to show love towards their neighbor as well as towards God."¹¹

As Christians we must realize that no permanent victory against evildoers is possible in this present world. The victory of the coalition forces against Iraq is of temporary nature. Other forms of oppressive government could easily emerge in Iraq. The removal of the Shah Reza Khan Pahlavi in Iran has given rise to an oppressive government controlled by Moslem fundamentalists, who deny to the Iranian their fundamental rights. All the major empires have eventually fallen and have been replaced by others. This will continue until the establishment of God's Eternal Kingdom at Christ's Coming.

The Early Christians' View of War

Pacifist often argue that until the time of Constantine in the fourth century, Christians did not enroll in the military service. When they joined the military in order to support the first Christian emperor, they departed from the faith and from the pacifist position of the early church. This argument ignores some of the obvious reasons why Christians refrained from military service.

Several Roman Emperors openly persecuted Christians and tried to suppress the Christian religion. The anti-Christian repressive measure of the Romans, would hardly encourage Christians to join the army. Moreover, the Roman government was corrupt and strongly promoted the Emperor Cult. John the Revelator was exiled to Patmos because he refused to worship Emperor Domitian as "Dominus et Deus—Lord and God." Soldiers were expected to take an oath of allegiance to the emperor and worship him as god. Under these circumstances Christians would hardly rush to become volunteer soldiers!

The situation changed dramatically at the time of Constantine. The Edict of Milan issued in 313 by Constantine and Licinius granted legal recognition and protection to Christianity. Christians no longer had to worship the emperor. Instead, the new

“Christian” emperor tried to unite the empire under Christian moral principles. Many Christians joined the army, because serving in the military was no longer an issue of idolatry. They sensed the desire to support the empire which had largely embraced Christian ideals and values.

The witness of the early church can hardly be taken as “proof” that Christians were pacifists. The fact is that there is no record that soldiers like Cornelius who became Christians ever left their post. Soldiers who were converted to Christianity continued to serve in the army and brought the knowledge of the Christian faith to such foreign countries like Britain. Clement of Alexandria (about 155-220) wrote: “Has saving knowledge taken hold of you while engage in military service? Listen to the commander who orders what is right.”¹² To the extent that Christian soldiers could follow the dictates of their conscience, they continue to serve in the army.

Just War Theory

When Christianity became the dominant religion of the western nations that emerged from the breaking up of the Roman Empire, the just war theory gradually developed over the centuries to provide criteria for judging the appropriateness of going to war and for governing the conduct of military forces during the war. Augustine (354-430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) were primarily responsible for formulating the *just war theory* which has guided the Christian approach to war to our day.

The theory consists of seven points which provides the framework for evaluating military action. A just war is supposed to include the following conditions: just cause, just intention, last resort, formal declaration, limited objectives, proportionate means, and noncombatant immunity. The first five principles are suppose to guide a nation planning to go to war, while the last two apply to the army in the midst of war. Briefly, here are the seven principles:

1. **Just cause**—Participation in a war must be prompted by a just cause or a defensive cause. No war of unprovoked aggression can ever be justified.
2. **Just intention**—The intent of the war must be just, that is, its intent must be to secure a just peace for all parties involved. Therefore, revenge, conquest, or economic gain are not legitimate motives for going to war.
3. **Last resort**—War must be engaged only as a last resort only after diplomacy and economic pressure have been exhausted.
4. **Formal declaration**—War must be initiated with a formal declaration by properly constituted authorities. Only governments can declare war, not individuals or terroristic organizations.
5. **Limited objectives**— War must be characterized by limited objectives such a peace. Complete destruction of a nation’s political or economic institutions is an improper objective. Once peace is attained hostilities are to cease.
6. **Proportionate means**—Combatants may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to secure victory. The types of weapons and amount of force used should be limited to what is needed to repel aggression and secure a just peace.
7. **Noncombatant immunity**—Military forces must respect individuals and groups not willing to participate in the conflict. Only governmental forces or agents are legitimate targets.

The interpretation and application of these seven principles is difficult in modern warfare. Their goal is to contain war, not to promulgate it. These moral guidelines are designed to minimized the death and devastation that accompanies war.

Spiritual Warfare

The Kingdom that Christ came to establish is a spiritual realm, not a political empire. Such a Kingdom is established not by military might (Acts 1:6), but through the willing acceptance of God's sovereign rule on the human heart. Jesus redirected the nature of warfare for the believer from the political to the spiritual realm.

For the Christian what is most important is to fight and win the spiritual warfare going on in the human heart. The aim is to recognize evil and to use the appropriate weapons to overcome it. The apostle Paul offers a stirring description of the armor that Christians are to put on to war against evil: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

"Therefore take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:10-17).

Winning the spiritual battles over every besetting sin should be the ultimate goal of every Christian. Meeting our obligations toward "Caesar" may sometimes obscure the goals of our spiritual warfare. But we should never allow political activism to become a substitute for aggressive spiritual growth and victory.

CONCLUSION

In this investigation we have tried to survey the biblical view of warfare. We have seen that wars stem from selfishness and pride. They reflect our fallen, rebellious human nature, which affects international as well as interpersonal relationships. War began in heaven when God Himself found it necessary to expel Lucifer to terminate his rebellion.

War is seen in the Bible as an unavoidable evil, reflective of the conflict between good and evil. When the wickedness of a nation or an empire reaches the limits of God's mercy (Gen 15:16), an armed intervention by another nation becomes necessary to bring such evil regime to an end. In the Bible the rise and fall of nations is the outcome, not of natural causes, but of God's intervention to bring to an end wicked and ruthless governments (Ps 75:6-7; Gen 15:16; Acts 17:26-27; Prov 14:34).

The Old Testament speaks of war in a realistic way, as a necessary evil to stop human rebellion and wickedness and restore a degree of peace and justice. The Israelites were instructed, not to be pacifist, but to wage a war in a responsible way, when necessity called for it. As expressed in Ecclesiastes "There is a time for everything . . . a time for war and a time for peace" (Ecc 3:1, 8).

In the NT Christ calls Christians to be peace-loving, not desiring conflict. Yet there are situations when resisting evildoers becomes a moral necessity, or Christ would not have counseled His disciples to buy a sword to defend themselves (Luke 22:35, 36) nor would He have fought with His angels in heaven against the devil and his angels (Rev 12:7).

We found that in Romans 13 Paul suggests that governing authorities have a legitimate right to use arms to maintain law and order within a nation and presumably to protect a nation from hostile foreign aggression.

Hebrews 11 praises the great warriors of the OT as great men of faith because they risked their lives in armed conflicts to defeat evil powers and advance the cause of justice. The implication is that faith is manifested, not only in passive resistance, but also in active armed intervention against evil.

Christians are called to be peacemakers, but peace is not always possible in this sinful world. Peace at any price is not peace, but appeasement. Our God is not only a God of peace; He is also a God of justice. Proverbs 21:15 says: "When justice is done it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers." Christians should be interested not only in peace, but also in justice. There are situations when justice can only be done through armed conflicts designed to ward off aggressors.

The Christian conscience has struggled through the centuries with the harsh realities of destructive wars which frustrate God's loving purpose for mankind. Most Christians accept the fact that when all peaceful alternatives have failed, the force of arms is preferable to unchecked aggression, tyranny, and genocide. However, there are Christian pacifists who conscientiously oppose all wars and therefore refuse to serve in any capacity in the armed forces. We must honor and respect the witness of pacifists. Personally I find more acceptable the Seventh-day Adventist position of serving in the armed forces as a noncombatant. The reason is that as Christians we must be prepared to alleviate human sufferings everywhere, whether they be in the battlefield or in a ghetto.

We yearn for the day when the endless cycle of war and bloodshed will be broken, the day when the Lord "will judge the nations and will settle disputes for many nations. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Is 2:3-4; NIV).

ENDNOTES

1. Arthur F. Holmes, "The Just War," in *War: Four Christian Views*, Robert G. Clouse, ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois 1991), p. 117.
2. Michael Novak, "The Winning of a Just War," *National Review Online*, April 9, 2003.
3. Dennis Prager, "When have millions of Europeans ever been wrong?" <http://www.townhall.com>, February 18, 2003.
4. Ibid.
5. Emphasis supplied.
6. President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 28, 2003. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>.
7. Ibid.
8. 5 Testimonies, p. 451.
9. See K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOT Supplement 98. Sheffield Academic Press.
10. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 219, 220.
11. Cited by Charles Colson, "Just War in Iraq," *Christianity Today*, December 9, 2002, p. 72.
12. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol 2, p. 200.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of April and May 2003. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

APRIL 4-5: LOS ANGELES: LANCASTER SDA CHURCH

Location: 43824 North 30th Street West, Lancaster, CA 93536
For information call Pastor Rockne Dahl at (805) 498-3382 or (661) 298-6148.

APRIL 11-12: LOS ANGELES: HOLLYWOOD SDA CHURCH

Location: 657 West 18th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90016
For information call Pastor Luis Pena at (714) 562-8928 or (714) 926-5028 or (213) 749-5190.

APRIL 18-19: WOODBURY SDA CHURCH

Location: Barber and Evergreen Avenue, NJ 08096
For information call Pastor Brian Stevenson at (856) 582 8595 or (856) 217 4443

APRIL 25-26: LOS ANGELES; TEMPLE CITY SDA CHURCH

Location: 9664 East Broadway, Temple City, CA 91780
For information call Pastor Benjamin del Pozo at (626) 286-5437 or (626) 292-2249

MAY 2-3: NEW YORK CITY: EPHESUS SDA CHURCH

Location: 101 West 123rd Street, New York, NY 10027
For information call Pastor Philip Wesley II at (516) 538-1317 or (212) 662-5536

MAY 9-10: LOS ANGELES: INDONESIAN-AMERICAN SDA CHURCH

Location: 803 West First Street, Azusa, CA 91702
For information call Pastor Dumas Tambunan at (909) 799-9105

MAY 16-17: LOS ANGELES: COMPTON COMMUNITY SDA CHURCH

Location: 1226 West Compton Boulevard, Compton, CA 90220
For information call Pastor John McCoy at (909) 268 4847 or (909) 629-4899

MAY 30-31: NEW YORK CITY: SHILO SDA CHURCH

Location: 449 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11218
For information call Pastor Winston Stephenson at (718) 771-4103 or (718) 978-4717

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In one Protestant church which was rented for my weekend seminar in Battle Ground, WA, they had a SANYO PROJECTOR with 4000 lumens. When we compared its image with that of my HITACHI, we decided to use mine because the image was sharper and brighter. The same has been true in other Adventist churches that have SONY, PANASONIC, IN-FOCUS, PROXIMA, SANYO, EPSON, etc. After trying them, I ended up using my portable HITACHI because it has a brighter and sharper picture.

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CP-X327W	XGA	1800 Lumens	6 lbs	\$6,795	\$2000.00
CP-S370W	SVGA	2200 Lumens	7 lbs	\$6,995	\$2200.00
CP-X385W	XGA	2200 Lumens	7 lbs	\$7,995	\$2800.00
CP-X430W	XGA	2500 Lumens	9.9 lbs	\$8,995	\$3300.00
CP-X880W	XGA	3000 Lumens	12.6 lbs	\$10,995	\$4000.00
CP-X885W	XGA	3500 Lumens	12.6 lbs	\$12,995	\$4700.00
CP-X995W	XGA	4500 Lumens	14.3 lbs	\$12,995	\$4900.00

If your church is interested in one of these projectors, I would be glad to mail you a copy of the catalogue with all the technical specifications.

Feel free to call me at home at (269) 471-2915 anytime from Monday to Thursday. On Friday I fly out to my weekend seminar destination. You can reach me at any time on my cellular phone at (269) 208-1942.

I look forward to help your church purchase a state of the art video projector at a bargain price.

Christian regards
 Samuele Bacchiocchi
 Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE NEWLY RECORDED SABBATH SEMINAR

To make it possible for Adventist churches in different parts of the world to benefit from my popular SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, few months ago the TEXAS MEDIA CENTER made a fresh recording of the seminar I presented at the First Fort Worth SDA Church in Texas. We spent several days preparing this new recording where I use about 100 PowerPoint slides for each presentation. The response has been very gratifying. Church leaders in different parts of the world are expressing appreciation for the blessings of these timely Sabbath messages. Your personal effort to share them with your congregation is much appreciated.

The new SABBATH SEMINAR consists of a total of 8 one-hour lectures covering the following topics: the gripping story of my search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University in Rome; the discoveries I made in Vatican libraries on how the change came about from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity; practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to experience Christ's rest and peace in our lives; an update report on the most recent Sabbath/Sunday developments; and a sacred concert with two outstanding tenors entitled THE SABBATH IN SONGS. The concert was recorded in a television studio in South Bend, Indiana.

This new SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR is now available in THREE FORMATS:

- 8 AUDIO cassettes,
- 4 VIDEO tapes,
- 3 DVD disks.

Each of them come in a nice plastic album with an artistically designed jacket. Your SPECIAL OFFER is as follows:

- 1) **SABBATH SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO CASSETTES** at the special offer of only \$30.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. The 8 audio cassettes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket.
- 2) **SABBATH SEMINAR IN 4 VIDEO TAPES** at the special offer of only \$60.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$120.00. The price is the same for both the American and the overseas PAL system. Specify which system you need. The 4 video tapes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket.
- 3) **SABBATH SEMINAR IN DVD DISKS** at the special offer of only \$70.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$170.00. The DVD disks are compatible with all TV systems overseas. No conversion is necessary. The 3 DVD disks come in a nice triple Jewel case with an artistically designed color jacket.

The easiest way to order the new AUDIO cassettes, VIDEO tapes, or DVD disks, is with your credit card. You can order by calling us at (269) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

Contact Information

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.
Retired Professor of Theology and Church History
Andrews University
4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone (269) 471-2915 Fax (269) 471-4013
E-mail: sbacchiocchi@qtm.net or sbacchiocchi@csi.com
Web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>